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ABSTRACT

Demographic characteristics, interpersonal and academic problems, underlying motives and needs, and ultimate goals of nontraditional students at a four-year liberal arts college were evaluated based on survey responses. The students were enrolled in the spring semester 1981 at a suburban publicly-supported, commuter college, located in the southeast. The full-time students were white, 30 years old or older, and enrolled in daytime classes. Questionnaires were completed by 96 females and 17 males. The majority of the respondents were married, parents, and employed at least on a part-time basis. The greatest differences by sex occurred regarding the impact of returning to college on emotional well-being, self-confidence, and meeting new friends, with women indicating substantially greater improvement in these areas as compared to men. Men indicated greater improvement as compared to women in accomplishing household chores and having adequate child care. Academic issues of concern involved a reluctance to become involved in campus activities, motivation to continue, and relating to younger students. The majority of all respondents reported self-actualizing and career-related goals as the major motivation in returning to school at a nontraditional age. They also report their return to college as a most favorable experience. Changes in the "assumptive world" of the respondents are considered, and recommendations to aid in program planning at the institution are offered. A bibliography is appended. (SW)

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Non-traditional Students: New Faces and New Issues

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Abstract

A survey was conducted among non-traditional students in a 4 year liberal arts college in an attempt to evaluate the demographic characteristics, interpersonal and academic problems, underlying motives, needs, and ultimate goals of these students. It was found that the majority of the respondents were married, parents, and employed at least on a part time basis. Contrasts were noted between male and female respondents most particularly in the areas of emotional well-being, self-confidence, meeting new friends, adequate child care, and accomplishing household chores. Academic issues of concern involved a reluctance to become involved in campus activities, motivation to continue, and relating to younger students. The majority of all respondents reported self-actualizing and career related goals as the major motivation in returning to school at a non-traditional age. They further report their return to college as a most favorable experience. Findings were discussed in terms of changes in the "assumptive world" of the respondents. Also recommendations were made to aid in program planning at the institution.

Non-traditional Students: New Faces and New Issues

The image conjured up by the term "college student" has changed radically over the past two decades. Traditionally, college students have ranged in age from 18-22. However, in recent years the influx of older, "non-traditional" students to colleges across the country has increased dramatically. (Tittle & Denker, 1980). There are varying definitions for the term "non-traditional" student. Letchworth (1970) defines non-traditional students as housewives between 20 and 40. Worley (1979) identifies such students as undergraduate, degree-seeking women, age 22 and older. Lourie & Mayo (1977) define them as those who have been out of school two or more years, and 25 years of age or older. In this study we have defined as non-traditional students those college students who are age 30 or older.

Previous studies have demonstrated a varying profile of such returning students. Tittle & Denker (1980) described returning women in the 1960's as typically 37 years old, married, and having two children. This particular study focused upon graduate students who had previously obtained an undergraduate degree. McClosky (1976) reported on a study conducted at Berkeley in 1973 which described the majority of women returning to college (both graduate and undergraduate) as primarily under 30 or over 50, divorced or unmarried, and financing their own education. These students sought degrees which would prepare them for future careers. Warley (1979) identified returning women at a southeastern commuter college as falling into two groups: those who had interrupted their education to marry and raise a family, and those who stopped attending school to take jobs. As the children entered school, or as they advanced as far as possible in their careers, these women returned to their college education. These studies suggest varied findings regarding the demographic characteristics of of non-traditional students. Thus, we were interested to investigate the characteristics of the non-traditional students at our institution.

An ongoing question regarding non-traditional students concerns the motivations which prompt them to go against well established age-related norms regarding the "appropriate time" at which one should pursue an education (Neugarten, 1964). Letchworth (1970) sees returning students (specifically, women) as attempting to rectify perceived deficits in their lives. He suggests such women are motivated by a need to seek relief from boredom , to escape from responsibilities, and by a desire to satisfy psychological needs for wholeness and adequacy. Brandenburg (1974) proposes motivations stemming from the desire to seek a renewed identity which begins to evolve during the phase of "middle motherhood"; that is, since family responsibilities diminish as children become older, the woman begins to explore additional possibilities for her future fulfillment. Glick (1977) appears to concur in his statistical documentation of an earlier and longer period in which child care needs are no longer primary. He terms this the "empty nest period." Consequently, he concluded, women now experience increased opportunities to explore careers outside of the home. Doty (1966) distinguished between returning women and non-returning women in terms of a pattern of interests she considered "traditionally masculine." This was contrasted with the findings regarding non-returning women. The latter were viewed as more "traditionally feminine." She further describes returning women as different from non-returning women in several areas: (a) non-traditional students report a longstanding desire to return to college; (b) they have been less inclined to experience satisfaction with prior social club activities; and (c) they are more likely to be married to spouses who have obtained college degrees. Almquist (1974) terms returning women as "pioneers" and, like Doty (1966), reports such women as displaying "male" career orientations. One finding of interest was that returning women more often had working mothers which suggests the influence of a positive role model.

A contrasting point of view is presented by Lowenthal, Chiriboga, and

Thurnher (1975). They discuss the development of changing attitudes among "postparental" middle-aged men and women. They describe a shift of emphasis in men from a manipulative and assertive stance displayed in early middle age toward an increased emotional sensitivity and interest in interpersonal relations. Women at this time move in the opposite direction, that is, toward assertiveness, mastery, and self-confidence. This "coming to balance" can thus be viewed as a positive transfer which then serves as motivation to both men and women to explore additional options which they had not previously considered for themselves. Our survey sought to investigate the motivations of non-traditional students at our institution.

The problems faced by the non-traditional students have been well documented. Steiger & Kimball (1978) discussed the special financial problems facing the nearly two million women (Eliason, 1977) attending colleges across the country. The returning woman who attempts to finance her own education is subject to the frequent discrepancy which exists between men's and women's wages in this country; that is, she is likely to have a lower salary than a comparably aged and educated man (Cross, 1971). For the returning woman whose education is financed by her spouse, access to financial aid will be determined by her husband's income, never will her actual access to that income be considered. Several revisions in the award system have been suggested by Steiger & Kimball (1978), such as the consideration of aid given to students who are not able to attend on a full-time basis. Many non-traditional women, due to attendant child care responsibilities, are unable to maintain a full-time schedule and consequently are unable to obtain financial assistance. It has also been suggested that family contribution requirements be reconsidered in order to take into account child care costs. Another common problem involves financial aid information specifically for non-traditional students. This is often

simply not available at many institutions (Mendelsohn, 1980). Often the financial aid officer is accustomed to thinking only of traditional sources of funding for traditional students. Mendelsohn (1980) recommends that financial aid officers become more aware of funding which is tailored to the needs of non-traditional students. Tittle & Denker (1980) suggest policy changes at the federal level which would serve to target innovative program money toward non-traditional women. They justify this in terms of the lengthening of women's lives and the extension of their time in the labor market. As they point out, such a system has begun to develop through existing support for education for unions and employers. Federal entitlements such as the G.I. Bill provide models of what is possible. In 1978 and 1979 the U.S. House of Representatives formed a Select Committee on Aging which focused upon policy recommendations directed toward midlife women. Specifically, such recommendations concerned a tax policy which would enable women to deduct educational expenses, including transportation cost and child care, over the entire period of their schooling. It was also recommended that the committee consider the possibility of loans which would be issued at modest rates of interest to women who wish to pursue professional or graduate training. Such Federal policy changes would thus support institutional development of programs for these special populations of students such as the returning women. Perhaps these recommendations are no longer relevant given the educational policies of the current administration.

In addition to the practical problems of financial aid and child care responsibilities, the returning student must also cope with academic readjustment (Brandenburg, 1974; Burnside, 1974; Howell, 1975), and competing demands on time (Letchworth, 1970; Mendelsohn, 1980; Schwartz, 1977). Beyond even these issues there is a universe of problems involving the shifting of personal relationships This is a complex process. Parkes (1972) offers a concept useful in examining

this process as it frequently occurs in the period of mid-life transition. He introduces the notion of an "assumptive world." Levinson (1978) discusses a similar concept but calls it a "life structure". Central to this idea is a process by which each individual develops unique perceptions of life based upon his/her individual set of experiences. Assumptions are formed about one's role in relationship to the expectations of others. This assumptive model then guides the individual in structuring his or her behaviors. These behaviors further guide and reinforce the expectations and concomitant behaviors of significant others. At this point everyone within the adult's life space is functioning based upon a set of mutual assumptions. As a spouse embarks on a new path of development (pursuit of a higher education, for example), profound alterations are made within the functional structure of the family's world. It is at this point that problems frequently arise. Each member of the family begins to respond to this shift as it impacts on his or her individual assumptions. The returning student initially attempts to maintain this assumptive status-quo but soon discovers that this is impossible. For example, the returning student no longer has excess leisure time for recreational activities with the family and/or friends; family chores and responsibilities begin to take a back seat to academic committments; children's demands and needs oftentimes must be met by the spouse, who may become resentful. At this point the functional structure of the family is in disharmony. From this disharmony must come the rearrangement of each family member's assumptive world, otherwise the returning student feels censured by all who are in his or her immediate life space. If the returning student and significant others cannot rearrange their assumptive world to fit the new reality, the returning student will not be able to continue. (Letchworth, 1970; Mendelsohn, 1980). While this study did not actually attempt to empirically test this model of change, it did attempt to elucidate the impact that a midlife return to college has on many aspects of the

non-traditional student's life. A further refinement involved evaluation of the differential impact on the lives of male and female non-traditional students. No studies were located which described the characteristics or problems of the male non-traditional student.

Thus, this study was undertaken to explore several issues. First, an attempt was made to describe the characteristics of a group of undergraduate non-traditional students at a four year liberal arts institution. Second, the motivations that prompted a return to college were elicited. Further inquiries were made as to the practical, interpersonal, and academic problems encountered by the returning non-traditional student. The unmet needs and ultimate goals of non-traditional students were also evaluated.

Method

Subjects

Respondents were currently enrolled students (Spring, 1981) in a suburban publicly supported, commuter college, located in the southeast. Participation in the study was voluntary. Criteria for inclusion in the study were: (a) full-time student status; (b) 30 years of age or older and (c) enrolled in daytime classes.

Procedure and Materials

A survey instrument was constructed, pre-tested for clarity and then mailed to 241 subjects who met the criteria indicated. The questionnaire inquired about eight areas: (a) demographic, self-descriptive information, (b) how various aspects of the student's life had been affected by entering or returning to college, (c) problems experienced in academically related areas, (d) motivations for entering college at this point in life, (e) post-graduation plans, (f) student services desired on campus, (g) non-credit seminars desired on campus, (g) non-credit seminars desired on campus and (h) comments or suggestions regarding non-traditional students.

Data Analyses

As indicated, 241 students met the criteria of the study. Of these, 82% (197) were women and 18% (44) were men. One hundred thirteen completed questionnaires were received and tabulated. This represented a return rate of 47%. Women comprised 85% (96); men 15% (17) of the sample. Thus, the sample appears to represent the proportion of men and women in the non-traditional student category at the institution in question.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Information

All 113 of the respondents were white and ranged in age from 30 to 54. The mean age was 37 and almost half (48%) were under 35. Respondents had an average of 2.2 children with 35% (41) having 3 or more children. Regarding class standing, 20% (24) were freshmen, 32% (36) were sophomores, 22% (25) were juniors and 19% (24) were seniors. While the institutional grade point average for Winter, 1981, was 2.5, the mean grade point average for this sample was 3.4. In Table 1, respondents were classified by marital status, while the household composition of our sample is presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Marital Status

Status	Proportion of Respondents
Single	2% (2)
Married	81% (91)
Separated	4% (5)
Divorced	11% (12)
Widowed	2% (2)

Table 2

Composition of Household

Status	Proportion of Respondents	
Live alone	3%	(3)
Live with spouse or partner	12%	(13)
Live with spouse/partner & children	68%	(77)
Live with children only	8%	(9)
Live with another adult	5%	(5)
Unknown or Missing	4%	(6)

The vast majority (81%) of our sample were married at the time of the survey. This implies that this role of full-time student exists within the context of an ongoing marital relationship for most of the non-traditional students sampled. This contrasts with the findings of earlier research in this area (McClosky, 1976) who reported most non-traditional students to be unmarried or divorced.

Table 3 indicates the employment status of our respondents both prior to and as they attend college. In sharp contradition to the common stereotype of the non-traditional student as a bored homemaker seeking to fill in the time previously occupied by growing children, it was interesting to note that 69% of our sample reported being employed for wages prior to returning to college. More surprising was the fact that a good proportion (41%) continue to work at least part-time as they continue as full-time students. Half of our sample (50%) combine full time student status with that of Homemaker.

Table 3

Employment Status

	Prior to Attending College		While Presently Attending College	
Employed for wages	69%	(78)	41%	(45)
Homemaker	15%	(16)	50%	(57)
Other (self-employed, unemployed or other)	16%	(19)	9%	(11)

The employment status of these non-traditional students is reflected in the method by which their college education is financed. Half (50%) of the

sample reports that a spouse or partner pays for college costs, while 42% indicate they pay their own expenses, as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4

How Education is Financed

Pay own expenses	42% (47)
Spouse/partner supports	50% (47)
Parents support	0% (0)
Scholarships	0% (1)
Grants	2% (3)
Loans	2% (3)
V.A. Benefits	4% (5)

In their selection of college majors, non-traditional students demonstrate that a vast majority are preparing themselves for fields that offer good prospects for employment. As indicated in Table 5, fifty-five percent of the respondents are concentrated in only three areas: Business Administration, Nursing, or Education. These three areas also represent the most popular concentrations for traditional students as well, though the proportions of students in each area are different: while 24% of the non-traditional students chose some sub-area within Business as a major, 33% of the traditional students are concentrated in this area. Eighteen percent of the non-traditional students were majoring in Nursing as compared with a 6% of the total student body. Thirteen percent of the non-traditional students were majoring in Education as compared with 6% of the total student body.

Table 5

Proposed College Major

College Major	Percentage of Respondents
Business	24% (27)
Nursing	18% (20)
Education	13% (15)
Psychology	8% (9)
Biology	6% (7)
English	6% (7)
History	6% (7)
Music	5% (6)
Assoc. Degree Program	3% (3)
Political Science	1% (1)
Chiropractic	1% (1)
Unknown	8% (9)

Respondents were also asked to indicate the highest level of education achieved by their spouse or partner. These results are presented in Table 6. Fifty-two percent report having spouses/partners with at least a college degree.

Table 6

Educational Level of Spouse or Partner

Highest Educational Level of Spouse	Percentage of Respondents
Some high school	2% (2)
High School graduate	17% (19)
Some college	29% (33)
College Graduate	20% (23)
Some Graduate School	5% (6)
Graduate degree	17% (19)
Unknown or not applicable	10% (11)

The demographic profile of the non-traditional student at this institution is somewhat different from previous descriptions. Here, she is about 35 years of age, married to a spouse with at least some college education and has at least 2 children. She was employed before returning to college and may often be employed while attending college. Her major is likely to be Business, Nursing or Education and her education may as likely be paid for by her own earnings as those of her spouse.

While most of the relevant literature focuses on returning women, a sizeable minority of non-traditional students are men. The literature has been clear in reflecting how sex discrimination aftects women's access to financial aid; and it is also a widely held belief that returning men and women have different problems relating to their return to college. However, there is actually little documentation as to how male and female non-traditional students are differentially affected by a return to the college campus.

Respondents were asked to indicate on a five point scale how various aspects of their lives have been affected by tneir pursuit of a college education. In order to evaluate how attending college differentially affects male and female non-traditional students data was analyzed by sex of respondents, and is reported in Table 7. Percentages of female respondents are listed above diagonal while results for male respondents are below the diagonal. A notation of "NR' indicates no subjects selected that response.

Table 7

Effects of Attending College

ISSUE	Has become a very serious problem for me	Has become problematic	Unchanged Non affected	Has Improved	Has improved greatly/very much better	Mean Scores
Financial Status	8% / 12%	31% / 41%	57% / 29%	3% / 12%	0% / 6%	2.5 / 2.5
Physical Health	NR / NR	11% / 6%	70% / 76%	18% / 18%	1% / 0%	3.0 / 3.1
Emotional Well Being	1% / 0%	12% / 24%	22% / 35%	42% / 29%	23% / 12%	3.7 / 3.2
Self-Confidence	0% / 6%	6% / 6%	16% / 53%	35% / 23%	43% / 12%	4.1 / 3.2
Relationship with Spouse/Partner	5% / 0%	25% / 21%	45% / 64%	19% / 7%	6% / 0%	3.0 / 2.8
Relationship with Children	1% / 0%	17% / 18%	51% / 82%	24% / 0%	7% / 0%	3.2 / 2.9
Relationship with Friends	3% / 0%	16% / 20%	54% / 60%	20% / 13%	1% / 7%	3.1 / 3.0
Meeting new Friends	0% / 14%	6% / 14%	18% / 14%	88% / 12%	20% / 7%	3.9 / 3.2
Accomplishing Household chores	9% / 21%	54% / 29%	27% / 36%	8% / 14%	2% / 0%	2.1 / 2.8
Adequate Child Care	3% / 0%	32% / 13%	63% / 88%	NR / NR	2% / 0%	2.6 / 3.3

Women / Men

Even with the built-in insensitivity of a 5 point scale inspection of the mean scores for each item reveals the areas of greatest differential impact. The greatest differences by sex occur in questions regarding the impact of returning to college on Emotional Well-being (3.7 versus 3.2), Self-Confidence (4.1 versus 3.2), and Meeting New Friends (3.9 versus 3.2), with women indicating substantially greater improvement in these areas as compared to men. Men indicated greater improvement as compared to women in Accomplishing Household chores (2.8 versus 2.1), and Adequate Child Care (3.3 versus 2.6). Inspection of the proportional frequency of each category of response reveals more about the nature of these differences. Regarding Emotional Well-Being, only 13% of the women respondents report a worsening in Emotional Well-Being, as compared to 24% of the men; sixty-five percent of the women students report improvements, as compared to only 35% of the men. The greatest differences between men and women was observed in the area of Self-confidence; while only 6% of the women reported a problem with this, 12% of the male respondents reported some deterioration. The majority of men (53%) reported no change in this area while 65% of the women reported an overall improvement. A third area of difference was in the responses to the item regarding Meeting New Friends. Here 88% of the women indicated improvement, with 20% reporting greater improvement. The men's responses were well dispersed among the possibilities; however only 19% indicated some improvement in this area.

The results regarding Accomplishing Household Choares and Adequate Child Care bear close examination. The differences in mean scores between men and women are due mainly to increased problems experienced by women non-traditional students. Fifty-four percent of the women report increased problems regarding these chores and 9% report serious problems. We remain curious about the 14% of the men who reported improvement in accomplishing household chores. Are

they doing less, or have they become more efficient? In terms of Adequate Child Care, 88% of the men as compared to 63% of the women report no change, while 32% of the women report problems and 2% report serious problems. This may be compared to only 13% of the men who report some problems in this area.

This constellation of differences between returning women and men is seen as illustrative of ongoing changes in the assumptive world of these students. Women report major positive shifts in what might be termed socio-emotional aspects of their lives. The previous sources for emotional-support, self-confidence, and sociability have all been affected by this major new entity in these critical aspects of her life, i.e., a return to school. To offer a specific example, we now have a returning woman student, who, shall we say, had her self-confidence tied up with her spouse, co-workers, and/or children. Now a major separate arena for increasing self-confidence has developed. The question then becomes one of whether those individuals, relationships, and even situations wherein self-confidence was an issue can accomodate this new functional structure.

Turning now to those areas of her life which have become more problematic; spouses, children, relatives, and friends have all had mutual expectations regarding functions such as household tasks and child care. These areas are now also in a state of flux, and again the question becomes whether those individuals and situations related to these structures are willing to accomodate, and whether she herself is willing to persist in having these changes take place. All of the areas of reported change can be evaluated within this model. Such information could be extremely useful in designing counseling and support services for non-traditional students.

Analysis of the response to the inquiry requiring academic oriented problems revealed differences (based on students' sex) in several areas, as

reported in Table 8. Here a higher score indicates a greater problem. Examination of the mean scores demonstrated the greatest differences in the areas of Reluctance to Become Involved in Campus Activities (1.7 versus 2.2 for women and men respectively), and Motivation to Coutinue Education (1.1 versus 1.6 respectively). Examination of the proportional frequencies of response indicates that a 41% of the men as compared to only 9% of the women report this to be a serious problem. The pattern of responses to the Motivation to Continue Education item shows that 86% of the women indicate that this is not at all a problem as compared to 53% of the men who answer similarly. However, 42% of the men indicate this is a problem area. In contrast, none of the women report a serious problem in this area.

Smaller differences, based on sex of respondent, appeared in response to the items inquiring about Relating to Younger Students (1.2 for women versus 1.6 for men), and Choice of a Career (1.2 versus 1.6 respectively); 77% of women reported no problem in relating to younger students, while male response tended to be more frequently in the problem range Seventy-nine percent of the women indicated no problem regarding Choice of Career, while male respondents more frequently tended to indicate problems in this area also (47%). Refer to Table 8.

Women / Men

Table 8

Academic Problems

ISSUE	Not at all a problem		Somewhat of a problem		A very serious problem		Mean Scores	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Deficiency in Reading/Writing Skills	73%	59%	26%	41%	1%	0%	1.3	1.6
Deficiency in Math Skills	42%	41%	39%	41%	20%	18%	1.8	1.8
Test Taking Anxiety	34%	59%	53%	29%	13%	12%	1.8	1.5
Choice of Major Program of Study	82%	63%	13%	31%	5%	6%	1.2	1.4
Finding Time to Study	24%	30%	60%	59%	16%	12%	2.0	1.8
Finding a Quiet Place to Study	41%	53%	42%	41%	17%	6%	1.8	1.5
Choice of a Career	79%	53%	15%	29%	7%	18%	1.2	1.6
Relating to Faculty	78%	88%	20%	6%	2%	6%	1.2	1.1
Relating to Younger Students	77%	53%	22%	35%	1%	12%	1.2	1.6
Reluctance to Become involved in Campus Organizations	41%	18%	51%	41%	9%	41%	1.7	2.2
Speaking up in Class	62%	77%	30%	18%	8%	6%	1.5	1.3
Feeling Alone on Campus	77%	53%	17%	29%	5%	18%	1.3	1.5
Motivation to Continue Education	86%	53%	14%	35%	0%	12%	1.1	1.6
Sexual Harassment	98%	100%	2%	0%	NR	NR	1.0	1.0
Concern for Safety on Campus	95%	94%	4%	0%	NR	NR	1.0	1.0

Thus, we see that male non-traditional students experience more problems as compare to women in four main areas. The application of Parkes "Assumptive World" model can aid us in understanding these findings. Men in their 30's and 40's also exist in an assumptive world regarding their roles and functions. On returning to the college campus, their assumptions are, of course challenged. It is not part of an adult male's assumptive world to relate to individuals younger than himself as peers. It is also a disruption of his assumptive viewpoint to take on the long range plan of a college degree; it violates his assumptive viewpoint to be taking this on in mid-life. On the college campus he is constantly reminded that he should have attained this at a younger age; these reminders are the young men surrounding him in every classroom. This conflict can become a psychological barrier to continuing, unless he can shift his assumptive viewpoint. This concept easily applies to the issue of choice of career. It is part of the assumptive world of an adult male that a career choice is set by age 30; however, the male non-traditional student must now come to terms with the fact that this part of his life is once again totally unsettled or "up for grabs."

Examination of Table 9 indicates that Self-Satisfaction was the most frequencly selected (20%) primary reason for returning to college. A Desire to Accomplish or Achieve (18%) followed as the most frequent primary motivation for a return to college. In order to bring these findings into sharper focus, the frequency with which each of the motives is reported as <u>one</u> of the top three reasons for returning to college is indicated. Now a somewhat different picture emerges. The most frequently reported motive was again Self-Satisfaction (65%). The second and third most frequently cited motive were Desire to Achieve or Accomplish (53%), and Intellectual Stimulation (47%). Then follow Career Advancement (37%), and Economic Self-sufficiency (35%). Adding to Family Income appeared as a

strong motivation for only 28% of the respondents. Boredom with Pre-college Situation was a motive for only 12% of the respondents, and the rarest motive offered was Desire to Enrich Family Relationships (2%).

Table 9

Reasons for Attending College

Reasons for Returning	Percentage Selecting as Primary Reason		Percentage Selecting as Secondary Reason		Percentage Selecting as Tertiary Reason	
Economic Self Sufficiency	16%	(18)	7%	(8)	12%	(13)
Intellectual Stimulation	12%	(13)	21%	(23)	15%	(17)
Boredom with Pre-College Situation	0%	(0)	5%	(6)	8%	(8)
Desire to Enrich Family Relationships	0%	(0)	1%	(1)	1%	(1)
Self Satisfaction	20%	(22)	31%	(34)	15%	(17)
Desire to Achieve or Accomplish	19%	(21)	25%	(25)	13%	(14)
Career Advancement	18%	(20)	6%	(6)	15%	(16)
To Add to Family Income	6%	(6)	6%	(6)	18%	(20)

Respondents were then asked to indicate their plans following graduation; as reported in Table 10. The high number of students seeking paid employment following graduation (54%) is not surprising given the major subject concentrations reported by these non-traditional students; the vast majority will be easily employable. Ninetten percent are planning to enter graduate school directly from college.

Table 10

Plans Post Graduation

Plans	Proportion of Respondents	
Seek Paid Employment	54%	(61)
Not Seek Paid Employment	0%	(0)
Seek Promotion or Advancement at Present Employment	9%	(10)
Graduate School	19%	(21)
Career Change	6%	(6)
Set up Own Business	3%	(3)
Take a Break	3%	(3)
Unsure	6%	(6)

As the number of non-traditional students grows it is important to know what specialized services are desired or perceived as needed by such students. Respondents were asked to indicate what campus services they desired. These results are reported in Table 11. The most frequently expressed desire was for Specialized Career and Vocational Services (52%). The second most frequent request was for general counseling services sensitive to the special needs of non-traditional students. Adequate Child Care facilities (34%), and Social Activities (34%) for non-traditional students were also greatly expressed desires. At the other end of the scale, there was little desire for support groups for spouses or partners (6%), or for Health Services (6%).

Table 11

Campus Services Desired

Services	Proportion of Respondents	
Specialized Career and Vocational Services geared to Non-traditional Students	52%	(58)
Specialized Counseling Services Geared to Non-Traditional Students	46%	(52)
Child-care Facilities adjacent to or on Campus	34%	(38)
Social Activities for Non-Traditional Students	34%	(38)
Orientation for Incoming Non-Traditional Students	33%	(47)
Support Groups for Non-Traditional students	30%	(33)
Social Activities for Families of Non-traditional students	28%	(31)
Specific Club or Organization for Non-traditional students	20%	(23)
Women's Studies Program	16%	(18)
Support Groups for Spouse or Partners of Non-traditional Students	6%	(7)
Health Services	6%	(7)

An additional inquiry was made regarding desires for non-credit courses. This was done for two reasons: we wondered what knowledge non-traditional students felt was not available through the regular college curriculum, and secondly, our institution is interested in increasing recruitment efforts directed toward the non-traditional segment of our community. Often, non-credit or Continuing Education courses serve as a "trying-out" area for such adults in the community who may be toying with the idea of returning to college. It

was hoped that the desires and interests of our matriculated non-traditional students might offer some insight as to the likely interests of similar though unregistered adults in the community. These results are presented in Table 12.

Career development was the most frequently cited (39%) non-credit seminar desired. Time Management (34%), and Assertiveness Skills (33%) were the next most popular selections. These seem to be in keeping with the stated motivations and goals of the non-traditional students sampled. They appear to be very employment oriented and all three of these seminars would offer valuable assets to an individual actively seeking employment. It is hoped this information can be utilized for long and short range planning purposes in Continuing Education and in future recruitment efforts.

Table 12

Non-credit Seminars Desired

Course Title	Proportion of Respondents	
Career Development	39%	(42)
Time Management	34%	(38)
Assergive Skills	33%	(37)
Legal Rights	32%	(36)
Decision Making Skills	32%	(36)
Parenting Skills	29%	(33)
Leadership Skills	27%	(31)
Political Issues	24%	(26)
Interpersonal Relationships	26%	(29)
Personal Financial Management	24%	(28)
Consumer Rights	23%	(26)
Marriage/Divorce Laws	19%	(22)
Non-Traditional Careers	19%	(22)
Equal Rights	16%	(18)
Landlord/Tenant Rights	5%	(6)

The last item on our survey was open-ended, and invited respondents to make any comments or suggestions they felt would be relevant. Of the 113 respondents 57% took the opportunity to add some narrative comments to the survey. These comments were categorized as to content and the proportional frequencies of such comments were calculated. They are presented in the order of their frequency of appearance in Table 13. Highly individualized, rare, or unclassifiable comments were grouped as Miscellaneous Other.

Table 13

Comments or Suggestions

Comment	Percentage of Students Making this Comment
College is a positive experience overall	13%
Faculty is supportive	10%
Competition from family demands is an ongoing issue	9%
I feel anxious about career/job possibilities	7%
There is need for support groups	7%
Counseling services should be more available	6%
Health services on campus are needed	6%
I feel increasing academic pressure to do well	6%
I need more flexibility in class scheduling	5%
Some faculty seem insensitive to the particular problems of non-traditional students	5%
Administrative rules seem inflexible	4%
Perceived lack of motivation in younger students is disturbing	4%
Problems in transfering of credits from other institutions	2%
Test anxiety is ongoing problem	2%
Miscellaneous other comments	14%

The most frequent comment was regarding the positive nature of the college experience (13%). Comments regarding favorable faculty attitude (10%) can be noted, although some non-traditional students (5%) remarked on the insensitivity of the faculty. Although the two most frequent comments were positive in nature, inspection of Table 13 also indicates a number of responses demonstrating concern and perhaps frustration regarding several issues; competing family demands, and employment related anxieties. A need for personal support and counseling services were quite evident. Our institution has no student health services and this apparently was of concern to a minority of our respondents, although a need for Health Services appeared last in a list of campus services desired (see Table 11).

Summary

This study was conducted for the purpose of exploring several issues relevant to the growing number of non-traditional students. Eight areas of interest were particularly focused upon and reported here. The typical non-traditional student was found to be about 35 or more, married, with 2 children, working at least part-time, or currently a homemaker. Half of the respondents reported their college costs are being paid by spouse, while 42% reported funding their own education. Motivations: as indicated by the results the vast majority of returning students report career oriented goals as their primary motivation for returning to college. Practical, interpersonal and academic problems: the scores reported indicated that returning wo-en experience increased problems in the areas of Accomplishing Household Chores and Adequate Child Care, while at the same time they report improvement in Emotional Well-being, Self-Confidence, and Making New Friends. Women also report a higher incidence of Test Taking Anxiety and Finding Time to Study. Men, on the other hand report less academically related problems, but increased financial problems. Most interpersonal relationships have been reported as unchanged by the majority of male respondents. All respondents reported a need for additional career and vocational guidance, together with specialized counseling services geared toward non-traditional students. Fifty-four percent of the respondents indicated their plans to seek paid employment after graduation, while 19% indicated plans to attend graduate school. Respondents were given the opportunity to offer suggestions or comments regarding their status as non-traditional students. Overwhelmingly, they reported that college had proven to be a most positive and rewarding experience at this point in their lives.

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